

Jan. 10, 2006

Dear Rural Life Task Force Member:

It was good to see many of you in Salina at our Dec. 19 meeting. We understand that holiday demands and truly nasty weather kept some of you safely at home. Hopefully our next meeting will be blessed with nothing but sunshine.

While much of the day was spent on a report back to the council by us and our agency partners, it was followed by some give-and-take about our role as advisors to the governor. Please read the enclosed notes to get up-to-speed.

Many at the meeting agreed there should be a better mechanism for concentrating our ideas and delivering our thoughts to the governor. So you will be asked to complete a survey that revisits the list of needs we developed early on. Your thoughtful reply will help the governor's staff make decisions.

We also feel there needs to be a more direct way to keep communicating and collectively keeping the irons in the fire, so the state is developing a listserve that will allow us to bring up issues, debate and discuss them, and further provide input. Watch for the email that will begin this online discussion of rural issues. Hopefully, this will make our service on the task force more engaging and more meaningful.

Finally, we wish all of you a peaceful and prosperous 2006 in a Kansas as great as it can be.

Marci and Dan

**Meeting of the Governor's Rural Life Task Force
Rolling Hills at Salina
December 19, 2005
10 a.m.-3 p.m.**

Community Wind Power Generation

Dan Nagengast and Joe Harkins, RLTF

Since the jointly sponsored trip to Minnesota with the Kansas Energy Council, RLTF members have been meeting with a group to develop a strategy for making community-owned wind facilities happen. Major farm groups are in agreement about the benefits and need for local ownership. A study will look at creating a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) for Kansas. If an RPS was implemented, either legislatively or through administrative actions, utilities would be required to purchase energy from sources such as wind and, conceivably, from community-owned wind farms.

The group has met with KDOC to discuss a call for bids to undertake the study, which could happen in the next half year.

KDOC also is producing a tool to help communities decide about community wind projects to prevent shaky projects from being undertaken.

Dan will meet with various interested parties and utilities in western Kansas in early January. He and others from the group will speak to farm groups about community wind this winter.

A good source for further information about community wind is:

<http://www.windustry.org/>

Agritourism

Becky Blake, director of travel and tourism for the Department of Commerce

A priority for the Rural Life Task Force from the beginning has been agritourism. The state's agritourism initiative is now in its third year. The Agritourism Council is now positioned to become an Agritourism Association. Educating individuals about product development and business and marketing skills has been the thrust of efforts so far. An agritourism website is up and running for producers. The Department of Commerce helped fund Ben Allen's position for the Agritourism 101 training. Its travel and tourism division is working on a new TravelKansas website that will help move travelers to agritourism locations. Commerce also is funding agritourism scholarships to producers who want to further their education and gather new ideas.

Kansas Food Policy Council

Dan Nagengast, RLTF

The Kansas Food Policy Council has been meeting with the governor's food security group under the auspices of SRS. The goal is to bring more private agencies involved with hunger and food assistance programs into the discussion. The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program continues to be successful. Tom Bishop questioned whether the program was serving smaller rural farmers' markets, and Dan explained some of the impracticalities of that happening at this time. The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program is still on the agenda within KDHE, but federal funding is not likely to be available to expand this program into Kansas in the near future.

Finally, there are many activities being considered for farm-to-cafeteria projects, especially school and university cafeterias. The Kansas State University/Kansas Rural Center Sustainable Agriculture Conference this year will focus on the food and human health aspects of our agriculture system. A list of meetings follows.

UPCOMING FOOD BUSINESS AND DIRECT MARKETING WORKSHOPS

Jan. 12-13 - High Tunnel Workshop and Four-State Vegetable Workshop at St. Joseph, Mo.

Jan. 16 - Farmers' Market training, Goodland

Jan. 17 - Farmers' Market training, Leoti

Jan. 18 - Family Business Planning Workshop, Wakeeney

Jan. 19 - Family Business Training Workshop, Smith Center

Jan. 21, 2006 - Kansas Grazers Association Conference, Assaria

Jan. 24 - KDA/KDOCH/KRC Direct Market Workshop, Dodge City

Jan. 25 - KDA/KDOCH/KRC Direct Market Workshop, Great Bend

Jan. 31 - KDA/KDOCH/KRC Direct Market Workshop, Salina

Feb. 1 - KDA/KDOCH/KRC Direct Market Workshop, Topeka

Feb. 8 - KDA/KDOCH/KRC Direct Market Workshop, El Dorado

Feb. 17-18 - KSU/KRC Conference "Healthy foods, Healthy Farms," Manhattan

Feb. 21-24 Farmers market workshops in Mo. and/or Wichita

Feb. 28 - Farmers Market workshops in Mo and/or Wichita

March 7-8 - Family Business Planning Training, Hays and Emporia

March 26 - Kansas Dieticians Conference, Food Policy Councils, Local Food, Topeka

March 31-Apr 1 - KFU & Great Plains Direct Market Workshop, Atwood

Rules and Regulation Project and Direct Marketing

Carole Jordan, Kansas Department of Agriculture, and Ruth Smerchek, Department of Commerce

Dan, KDA, KDOC and others have been meeting regularly to review rules and regulations governing direct\-marketed agricultural commodities. The goal has been to balance food safety with clarifying some rules that could allow more direct marketing to occur. KSU has updated the Food Processors Manual. KDOC and KDA have organized five workshops that will meet around the state to help farmers and people interested in direct marketing. They are planned for Jan. 24, Dodge City; Jan. 25, Great Bend; Jan. 31; Salina; Feb. 1, Topeka; and Feb. 8, 2006 in El Dorado.

Many other workshops focusing on farmers markets and other aspects of direct marketing have been scheduled for the next three months. You can view a complete listing at:

<http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/calendar.html>.

Carole Jordan discussed plans to simplify the regulatory path through the upcoming workshops and through proposals developed by Department of Agriculture regulators. The Kansas Egg Law will be offered to the Legislature this session for updating. Food safety personnel also developed some new regulations that will help direct marketers while maintaining the information needed to track food safety problems, and to provide educational materials to our home-based and farmers' market vendors.

Ruth Smerchek thanked the Department of Agriculture for their openness in discussing situations and concerns from direct marketers. The task force will receive invitations to the upcoming direct marketing seminars. The Department of Commerce currently is working on a "Taste of Kansas" foods guide, including institutional packaging companies. The task force will be notified when this is available, and it will be available online. She also unveiled the new "Bringing Freshness to Your Table" campaign that will be available to farmers' markets next season.

The Three Task Force Pilot Communities

Marci Penner and Patty Clark

Work is ongoing with the three pilot communities chosen by a task force subcommittee led by Marci Penner. Other committee members were Dave Govert, Joe King, Sharla Krenzel, Mike Mayberry, Dan Nagengast, Marci Penner, Tim Peterson, Debbie Richter and Dan Thalmann. They created the pilot project application and reviewed information submitted by 47 communities.

The communities selected were Onaga, Smith Center and Eastern Cowley County (Atlanta, Burden, Cambridge, Dexter and the eastern rural area).

Housing is the priority issue for Onaga. They received their first team visit, which included USDA-Rural Development, Kansas Housing Resource Corporation, Kansas League of Municipalities and the Department of Commerce. Their first priority is to address housing, nuisance and zoning ordinances, and enforcement actions. They will conduct a public meeting this winter featuring USDA/KHRC to provide information to homeowners and property owners regarding assistance programs for existing and new housing and weatherization programs. Commerce is likely to follow up with some additional CDBG assistance with a community improvement grant. Theirs will more than likely be a five- to ten-year plan.

The next meeting with teams for Eastern Cowley County is scheduled for January 9. Issues include business and job creation, downtown development, youth retention, agritourism and housing.

Smith Center's top issue is image building. Other issues include downtown development, business and job creation, wealth retention and youth retention.

In each case, lessons will be learned about how communities develop goals and prioritize issues, as well as how agencies deliver services.

The Kansas Collaborative

Kathleen Harnish-Doucet, CEO TeamTech, Inc.

John Waltner, Special Projects Director for Harvey County

The Kansas Collaborative is a joint effort of the state of Kansas, the Kansas Association of Counties and the League of Kansas Municipalities to foster collaboration and improve government efficiency. By promoting creative problem-solving across jurisdictions, The Kansas Collaborative identifies potential cost-savings through data analysis and strategic planning. Projects of The Kansas Collaborative are managed and facilitated by TeamTech, Inc.

The first-ever County/State Health and Human Services Summit resulted in the county/state Prescription Drug for Incarcerated Populations Breakthrough Team. This team's work led to more than \$2 million in savings by both state and county governments. This success was the catalyst for The Kansas Collaborative.

The focus is on demonstrating results that are possible when units of government work together collaboratively. Early task force discussion focused on breaking down barriers between units of government.

More information is available at www.TheKansasCollaborative.com. Interested persons are encouraged to sign up for one of the breakthrough teams.

Other current teams include:

Community Capacity Building

This breakthrough team will create a pilot in Harvey County to demonstrate how to link county, communities and state agencies (Kansas Governor's Grants Program, Kansas Department on Aging, Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority, Kansas Children's Cabinet, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and Kansas Department of Education) together.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

GIS is the information highway for collaboration because its highest value is in providing easily understandable data and information across disciplines and jurisdictional lines. The purpose of the GIS Collaborative Breakthrough Team will be to link existing GIS efforts to explore and implement cross-jurisdictional applications, including data sharing and integration, adopting and sharing statewide standards, building models to address the shortage of skilled GIS employees, piloting models that enable rural applications and expanding outreach efforts.

Transportation Purchasing Pool

Local government wants access to state and multi-county purchasing power. Items such as gasoline, diesel fuel, heavy equipment, vehicles, barricades, bridge timbers, culverts, tires and road signs are on the shopping list. This breakthrough team will strive to balance

pooled purchasing and multiple vendors with supporting local businesses. Success will look like lower prices and consistent standards while serving the needs of municipalities, counties and the state.

Brainstorming and Issues Identification—What Comes Next?

Members of the Task Force

A document containing the original issues identified by the task force at its first set of story development meetings was handed out.

- Gene Merry said he was interested and pleased to note how many of the issues identified by the energy/infrastructure team had been accomplished in the last three years.
- After the discussion about direct marketing workshops and revised food safety rule and regulations, Tom Bishop asked that the task force receive the brochure and the new regulation language.
- After discussion of three pilot community projects, there were comments on how to share the information learned in pilot projects with other communities. Tom Bishop and Roger Masenthin indicated that task force members should be more engaged. They want to help other towns. “What is the role of the Rural Life Task Force in this?” they asked. Marci Penner asked how task force members could be used more efficiently.
- In the ending discussion, two questions came to the fore: What is the role of the council? What are its new priorities? Joe Harkins said he sees its role as advisory.
- Marvin Penner asked how to encourage everyone to get involved in the collaborative efforts.
- Roger Masenthin and Tom Bishop continued to be quite engaged, asking again about the issue of a listserve and providing more documents to everyone.
- Marci Penner said she would like to see more dialogue and two-way communication, with the RLTF serving as a think tank for rural Kansas.
- Patty Clark agreed to add the entire task force to the pilot community listserve.
- There were many questions about how the other 43 communities that applied for the pilot program will be helped.
- Tom Bishop asked that the notice and plan on CDBC consolidation be sent to all 43 communities that applied to be a pilot community.
- Marci Penner expressed a new idea: she’d like the task force to develop a new website with a search feature that would contain numerous articles, ideas and resources for rural areas. Ideas could be shared.
- Dan Nagangast noted that energy costs are having profound effects on agriculture and rural areas. Joe took the opportunity to tell about the three primary issues adopted by the KEC last week. Does KDA, as part of the agriculture energy committee, need to invite a couple of RLTF members to meet with us to develop that scope paper? Dan suggested there be RLTF input into agriculture and transportation. We need to get information to them about sessions to develop those two scope papers.

- Tom Bishop said statewide mortgage assistance should be a priority—the long-standing issue of revenue bonds not being available in rural areas. Why not put a team together to work on a pilot project on this issue?
- Joe King again suggested that energy conservation and efficiency be a priority.
- Dave Govert brought up liability insurance coverage. He asked the status of the issue for agritourism (where some work has been done) and then said farm liability is a problem, too.
- DOC representatives took this opportunity to reiterate steps that have been taken to improve liability insurance coverage for agritourism, including getting legislation passed, creating a registration process to go with a tax credit toward the cost of insurance, numerous workshops, communications and publicity. This hasn't been tested in the courts.
- Dave Govert said he still believes there should be legislation regarding situations in which decisions of “no contest” occur; that they should not show up on records for future claims.
- Brian Dunn would like to have some impact on the meth culture and its effect on rural life.
- Tim Peterson said the RLTF needs a new status report. He agrees that energy is continuing to be an important issue.
- There were questions raised about the eight issues ranked at the April 2005 task force meeting in Salina and how they have fared. Those issues were:
 1. Rural economic development issues, including improved information delivery about resources to businesses and analysis of lottery sales and EDIF funding.
 2. Kansas products warehouse.
 3. Government clustering—efficiency and enhancement of government services.
 4. Review rules and regs regarding direct marketing and value-added agricultural commodities.
 5. Develop and implement a “Governor’s Good Health Program.”
 6. Develop an ongoing human services working group.
 7. Broadband and Internet policy council.
 8. GIS systems.
- We discussed adapting the original story bullet document to show which issues have been tackled and which have not. This document will serve as a kind of survey to be sent to all task force members along with a report of this week’s meeting. Task force members would be asked to rank their top five remaining issues and to suggest new or evolving issue(s). Data returned will be used to set future goals. The re-ranked issues (from survey) would be sent to task force members.
- Such recycling of issues and requests for feedback would be done on a regular basis.
- Tom Bishop brought up the Kellogg Foundation grant. There was some discussion of asking Dan Kaul if Extension could help with creating a grant for an entity. This is an extremely time-consuming process.